A TAMIL PUN OF ST. PAUL.

WIDOW PROBLEM OF I TIMOTHY v. 16.
VIDUA (LATIN)—VITTAVA (TAMIL)
CHERAI (GREEK)—CHERAI (TAMIL)

BY

M. S. RAMASWAMI AIYAR, B.A., M.R.A.S.,

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE.

MADRAS:

PRINTED AT THE MADRAS LAW JOURNAL PRESS, MYLAPORE.

1926.

M. S. RAMASWAMI AIYAR.

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St. Paul wrote letters to different persons and Associations regarding Christian work. He wrote to Epistles to Timothy. Prof. Bisseker in commenting on the Vth chapater of the 1st Epistle to that person observes that "The space devoted to widows indicates the existence of a special difficulty in Asia." In I Timothy v. 3-16, according to theologians Paul dealt with the question of widows. "Widow indeed" and "Widows indeed" occurring in verses 3 and 5 are perfectly intelligible. But "Widows indeed" occurring at the end of the 16th verse is a great puzzle to scholars.

That verse is as follows :—"If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them and let not the Church be charged ; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed."

The Tamil Bible published by the British and Foreign Bible Society translates the puzzling expression as உத்தம விதவைகள்.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to state certain facts at the outset. Timothy is said to have been the son of a Gentile (Greek) father and a Hebrew mother. As the Greek father either died

or deserted the family very early, Timothy had a sound Jewish training under the superintendence of his native mother and grandmother (1). So we are justified in presuming that Timothy had a good knowledge of Aramaic. Ancient Church Fathers like Jerome suggest that Paul's knowledge of Greek was not very good and so he had to employ Titus as his interpreter as Peter had Mark (2). In these circumstances there can be no reasonable objection to our presuming that Paul wrote the Epistle to Timothy in Aramaic. Scholars, however, opine that the Epistle was originally composed in a European language. Which language was it? A Jesuit priest called Hardouin held that the New Testament was originally composed in Latin. This view was subsequently adopted by certain Roman Catholics, chief of whom was Mocklenbuhr and which view found a clever and ardent advocate even in England in the anonymous author of Poloeromaica, to refute which book some of the ablest scholars of the Church of England entered the lists. Sectarian considerations however unfortunately colour most of these discussions. The view generally held by scholars now is that the New Testament was originally written in Greek and not in Latin. What-

(1) Sir William Smith's Concise Dictionary of the Bible, Art. Timothy.

(2) Pope-Catholic Students Aids to the study of the Bible, vol. III, p. 54.

ever might be the view of scholars regarding the original language of the New Testament, there can be no doubt that since the Apostles of Jesus played a large part in Romanised and Grecianised lands they must have known and must have had occasions to use during the course of their missionary work both Latin and Greek in addition to their own native Aramaic. No Aramaic version of the New Testament has come down to us: Latin and Greek ones survive. Since the English Bible is practically a translation of the Latin and Greek versions(1) these ancient versions must be used for purposes of discussion. Latin and Greek terms for the English widow are Vidua and Cherai respectively. It is immaterial to me whether the Epistle to Timothy was originally composed in Latin or Greek, for what I propose to say now is applicable to both versions.

A superficial reading of the verse would indicate that it conveys meaning but a little reflection would show that it gives no sense at all. Let me explain my contention. As it is the verse says that those believers who have widows in their families should support them and not indent upon the Church so that the Church might support widows indeed. A widow is she who has lost her husband and a widow indeed is one who is truly a widow. Would

(1) People's Bible Encyclopaedia, p. 1161.

not true widows have existed in the houses of well-to-do believers? When that is so, are we to understand that those who were in a position to get help from their relations were not true widows and that those alone on whom Church funds should be spent were true widows? The verse conveys no intelligible meaning. That is why the Editor of the "Conquest Bible" ends the verse thus "widows indeed and desolate" to make it somewhat intelligible though he had no authority to add the last two words. The Biblical verse is obscure. What is the meaning of the expression "widows indeed" of the 16th verse : what do scholars say?

(1) Dean Alford in his commentary on the Greek Testament (Vol. III, p. 344 *et seq*) remarks with reference to verses 3-16 "This whole passage is somewhat difficult and has been variously understood."

(2) Sir William Smith's Concise Dictionary of the Bible (p. 947) notes that "The younger widows of I Timothy v. II cannot possibly be literally widows. It follows therefore that the word Cherai is used, as it was in the 2nd century, in a wider sense as denoting a consecrated life."

(3) Prof. Bisseker in Peake's Commentary on the Bible (p. 884) says: "The space devoted to widows indicates the existence of a special difficulty in Asia. Paul gives Timothy definite instruc-

tions. (*a*) Deserving widows left alone should be maintained from Church funds. (*b*) The funds however must not be burdened by widows with descendants or friends capable of assisting. Descendants must make it their first charge to fulfil the family obligation involved. Otherwise they disown the Christian way of life and acknowledge a standard lower than that of unbelievers. (*c*) The mark of a true widow is that avoiding dissipation which is spiritual death, she has forsaken domestic ties for the whole hearted service of God. (*d*) None should be placed on the official roll who is not (i) sixty years old, (ii) of proved self-restraint, (iii) of established reputation for good works. (*e*) Younger widows should not be included, because (i) they may wish to re-marry, and so violate their troth to Christ; (ii) in their visitings they may become busy bodies. Since, then, they cannot control their natural instincts, let them marry again and attend to household cares. Actual experience shows this to be wise.

"3-16 forms a single paragraph. It is usual to refer 3-8 to the maintenance of widows and 9-16 to the selection of an Order within the Church's official ministry. Though the maintained widows doubtless rendered some service, this sub-division is improbable because (*a*) the subject of maintenance is still prominent in 16, (*b*) the same word 'widow' would not bear two different meanings

within a few verses, (*c*) a minimum age limit of sixty is more natural in charity than in service."

(4) Dummelow's one volume commentary on the Bible (p. 998) in commenting on the expression widows indeed of the 16th verse remarks "Each local Church kept a list of the widows belonging to the congregation, who were supported by the alms of the faithful if they were widows indeed that is if they had none to help them."

(5) E. M. White in her recent book on "Women in World History" (p. 304) says:—"The Acts of the Apostles' record many instances of women's work in the early Church and they appear to have been active in the propagation of their faith as the men......Women who prophesied or spoke forth the truth they felt are also mentioned and the Order of widows or Vidua which did not necessarily mean married women was one consisting of ecclesiastical office. Tertulian speaks of "the Virgins who were called widows" and mentions four classes of women officials....".

(6) Rev. E. Walder in his (quite) recent book on "Christian Colours" (p. 89) notes that "there seems an obvious distinction made between widows and those that are really widows (1 Tim. v. 3). Real widows seem to imply those who have left their husbands for the sake of Christ and have given practical proof of it by their Christian work (I Tim. v. 10)."

These extracts are enough. For your convenience let me bring out in a pointed manner the salient points of the commentaries quoted. Dean Alford frankly admits that the whole passage is obscure. As his commentaries are long, it is not possible for me to give them in full but their perusal will reveal to what extremities one is driven if the term widow is taken in its literal sense. Sir William Smith's Dictionary says that the word widow of the 11th verse cannot literally be a widow, that the Greek term Cherai denoted in the 2nd century a consecrated life and that the word of the 11th verse must have had the meaning of the 2nd century. Even if Cherai meant in the 2nd century what Sir William Smith's book says, how can that meaning be given to the words of Paul who lived a century or so earlier? Whatever that may be, Sir William Smith's remarks are equally applicable to the widows indeed of the 16th verse, under discussion. Prof. Bisseker interprets the expression as deserving widows left alone. Further according to him verses 3-16 are one paragraph and that it is usual to sub-divide the paragraph into two, 3-8 as one part and 9-16 as another part. He objects, however, to such a sub-division, since the term widow would then bear two different meanings which is impossible as that word could have only one meaning. In passing it may be added that though the Professor freely uses the word

re-marry in his commentary yet the word occurring in the chapter in question is marry not re-marry. Dummelow's Commentary points out that the expression means widows who had none to help them. While Bisseker understands the puzzle as deservingly helpless widows, Dummelow's book takes it to mean any helpless widow whether deserving or not. There is this difference between the two. In any case a widow indeed is a true widow, and a true widow is one who exhibits the characteristics of a real widow which are I believe moral ones. I am not aware that helplessness or impecuniosity are marks of real widowhood. Miss White says that widows indeed mean unmarried women also. It is a puzzle to me how she got that idea, since the word has only one meaning in English, Latin and Greek. Rev. Walder on the other hand says that a real widow was she who left her partner for the sake of serving Christ. According to this scholar real widows are not those who lose their spouses but only those who run away from their husbands—a proposition to which the majority of the people of this world would not subscribe. Which of these commentators is correct? No wonder that Dean Alford remarked that the whole passage is difficult and that it has been variously understood. It will thus be seen that if the Biblical verse is obscure, the commentaries are bewildering. I do not know whether the Church-going Christian population has

at any time reflected on the difficulties of this verse and the bewildering explanations of scholars who write to enlighten them.

If "Widows indeed" mean women that lead a consecrated life as Sir William Smith's lexicon says; helplessly deserving widows as Prof. Bisseker remarks; desolate widows as Dummelow's book says; unmarried women as Miss White makes out or runaways as the Reverend gentleman wants us to believe, would not St. Paul have said so in so many words? When Europeans themselves have not decided what is the precise meaning of the puzzling expression, how can the Tamil Bible render it உத்தம விதவைகள். If the words mean exemplary widows as the Tamil Bible puts it, why should Paul grudge to call such women living in the households of well-to-do believers "widows indeed?" If perfection is the test on the other hand for gift, why should the Apostle refuse to sanction money from church funds to such exemplars? No, the meaning seems to be none of these. A perusal of the literature on the subject indicates that the Saint is not differentiating in the 16th verse between widows who were desolate and impecunious and those who were otherwise: he is simply referring to widows who had people to help them and to widows (whatever might be its meaning) on whom church funds should be expended. The object of Paul in despatching the letter to Timothy was to explain clearly

certain points and would he in an epistle where clearness is essential, be obscure? No it is very unlikely. There is some mistake somewhere.

Since Paul was a great missionary who did a good deal of travelling in Italy, Greece and Palestine for purposes of preaching and was a Roman citizen to boot, he must have had a sufficiently fair knowledge of Latin and Greek in addition to his own native Aramaic. And there must have been occasions for him for broadcasting in those countries the sentiments expressed in this Pastoral Epistle of his. No Aramaic version of the Epistle has come down to us: Latin and Greek ones survive. We do not know what Aramaic term he used for the puzzling expression. The words Vidua and Cherais occurring at the end of the 16th verse in the Latin and Greek texts may be attributed to him. Was Paul then responsible for the obscurity?

In talking to a friend of mine once about a certain personage, I said that he was a great man. Yes, remarked my friend with a smile, he was a great man. Man in Tamil means earth, clay but it sounds somewhat like the English term man. The remark of the friend meant that the personage was a clay-headed fool whom circumstances pushed up. The remark contains a Gudartham with the Tamil word. Such a figure of speech is called Slesha in Sanscrit, Siledai in Tamil and Paronomasia in English.

Palestine in the times of St. Paul was a trilingual country as Latin, Greek and Aramaic were then in use in it. Paul was a Hebrew and Latin and Greek were alien tongues to him. He must have thought at first in Aramaic before he put his ideas in Latin or Greek, even as the friend in the hypothetical case mentioned above did. If the Epistle had been composed in a European language originally, the European form is after all a translation, the outer garb of Paul's native Aramaic thought. To comprehend Paul truly one must look through his lips into his brain. Since the 16th verse gives no sense as it is, in all probability, the puzzling expressions Vidua and Cherais at the end of the 16th verse are non-Latin, non-Greek paronyms as in the hypothetical friend's remark. By studying the Latin and Greek versions of the Epistle literally scholars are only observing the motion of his lips without gazing beyond them into his brain to grasp the native Aramaic thought of Paul that lies behind these European versions and that is why they are unable to clear the obscurity of the Biblical passage.

Hypothesis is an absolutely necessary means for gradually advancing to better knowledge in an obscure region of enquiry. Let us not be afraid of hypotheses: we must have the courage to make mistakes. For an error may be fruitful: it may contain elements of truth and assist in finding out

the right way. That it shall do no injury, science itself will take care, for it is a ceaseless process of self-correction. If the problem be examined anew without predilections on the lines suggested by me the mistake may perchance be located and the verse made intelligible.

Where there is a disease there is the remedy also runs a Tamil proverb. If there is mistake or obscurity in the Bible the writings of Europeans themselves provide the necessary corrections. Let us turn back to Sir William Smith's lexicon and Prof. Bisseker's Commentary. The former tells us that the term widow of the 11th verse must not be understood literally but taken in an extended sense as denoting one who led a consecrated life. Prof. Bisseker says that "It is usual to refer 3-8 to the maintenance of widows and 9-16 to the selection of an Order within the Church's official ministry". The religious selection mentioned above is apparently the extended sense of Sir William Smith's book and the Order of Widows or Vidua mentioned by Miss White. The Professor objects to the sub-division of verses 3-16 into two parts because "the same word 'widow' would bear two different meanings within a few verses". It is clear from his commentary that if verses 3-16 are sub-divided into two parts, as is usually the custom, the word widow has two different meanings.

Nearly two thousand years have run their course since St. Paul penned this Epistle and yet in spite of the advice and objection of scholars, people have been sub-dividing verses 3-16 into two parts all these centuries. There must be some strong reason for the adoption of such a course. Since people are very conservative in matters touching religion and sacred literature, they must have been making the objected sub-division, because I suppose uninterrupted ancient tradition urged them to do so. But if we make the sub-division we must be prepared to give two different meanings to the same word widow as suggested by Prof. Bissekar. The West has been sub-dividing the verses into two parts and yet giving only one meaning to the term widow. I said a little while ago that there is some mistake somewhere. The mistake seems to lie in giving one meaning to a paronymous word that has apparently got two different meanings. That much seems sufficiently clear for the present. But what could its second and different meaning be? In spite of the attempts to give an extended sense to the Greek term as mentioned in Sir William Smith's book, the Latin and Greek words Vidua and Cherai like the English widow has only one meaning in the West. That is why the vision of theologians is limited by the horizon of Europe. But the traditional sub-division of the verses into two parts connotes the existence of a second and

different meaning to that word. And instinct tells us that ancient traditions are usually correct. If Europe does not supply the second and different meaning of the paronym some other country connected with Christianity may. Which land could it be, Palestine?

A picturesque writer has said that Syria and Palestine were the level-crossings of three continents. In the clash of races and civilisations Biblical Palestine is no more now. Modern Palestine cannot help us therefore. Now a Jew of Damascus region informed Aristotle that the Jewish people had their origin in India (1). The back-ground of Palestine is our country. And it has been shown in my articles on Christ in the Madras Press that the Hebrews were ancient Tamil emigrants, that Jesus Christ was a Tamilian and that his mother-tongue Aramaic was Tamil.

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past
And plunged in thought again

sang a poet in speaking of the march of Alexander the Great into India. And these words are as true to-day as they were in the days of Phillip's warlike son. For the hoary Past is still Present to us in our land. If modern Palestine cannot help us, modern India can. It is to India then that we

(1) Josephus Against Apion I, 22.

must turn. For India is the key with which to open the sealed book of ancient Judaism and the Holy Bible of the Christians. The moment one turns thither what is ununderstandable in old Judaism and obscure in Christianity becomes luminously clear.

Bisseker remarked that the space devoted to widows indicates the existence of a special difficulty. Take that matter itself. Does not India throw lurid light on it? The widow problem is a serious one in our country. It is a difficult one in modern times because the past left it to us as a legacy. That problem seems to have been as tangled in India then, as now. Was it not because Palestine was an Indian colony, Jesus Christ a Tamilian and Christianity a Hindu sect that the widow question raised its head in the West in the times of St. Paul to give him trouble? St. Paul I said in one of my published articles was a Brahman. The widow problem is an acute one especially in the Brahmanic community. In these circumstances, there is nothing strange in a Brahman like St. Paul devoting much space to that thorny question. That is only by the way. We are trying to find out what second and different meaning the puzzling word widow could have.

Western books themselves, as I have said, supply the required clues. In each of the extracts quoted we will find something that will be of

use in our quest. The information given by Dean Alford is a negative one. Those furnished in Sir William Smith's book are not of much help at the present stage: they may be useful subsequently for verification of results. Bisseker's objection to the sub-division of the verses into two parts forced us to turn to India for solution. Miss White said that widow does not necessarily mean married woman. Widow, Vidua or Cherai does not mean in Europe spinster. How did Miss White say so? She could not have coined that meaning. Was Tertulian responsible for it? We may know it at the end. In the meanwhile let us seek through this meaning in India. The English and Latin terms Widow and Vidua are the same as the Sanscrit Vidhava. The Sanscrit Vidhava is made up of Vidhava, Vigatho dhavo yasyas sa, she whose husband is dead. Dean Alford (1) and Dr. Roberts (2) seem to think that the Greek term Cherai has some connection with destitute of help or poor and the People's Bible Encyclopaedia (p. 1174) with deficiency. From my studies I notice influence of Tamil on the Greek language. Is there any connection between the Greek Cherai and the Tamil Kurai, lacking, wanting, deficient? In India too Vidhava and Cherai (if the Greek term is connected with Tamil Kurai) have no two meanings.

(1) Dean Alford Greek Testament, vol. III, p. 351.

(2) Dr. Roberts Greek, the language of Christ, p. 196.

Rev. Walder said that a true widow was a runaway from home who joined the Church to serve Christ. Even a child knows that that is not the meaning of widow in any language. Rev. Walder is a scholar who knows a thousand times more than a child. How did he then give that meaning? He could not have created it. He too must have got it through lingering tradition. According to Rev. Walder, a widow indeed is a runaway. According to Prof. Bisseker verses 9-16 in which this puzzling expression occurs refer to a religious order. Let us seek in India with these two clues.

The ways of Heaven are not the same as the ways of the world, for soul's eyes are shaped for tears. India learnt that truth millenniums ago. In this country it is a praiseworthy act to run away from home leaving family and foregoing the pleasures and honours of the world, to join a religious association to serve God. Such folk are called Sanyasis and Dasas, they are a religious Order and their association is called an Asramam, Matam, etc. To invite such people, to show respect to these and to entertain them after washing their feet (the acts mentioned in I Timothy v. 10) are considered to be not only meritorious actions but also the duty of every Indian householder. If Palestine was an Indian colony, would not these institutions have been transplanted there? But does evidence exist to prove that Sanyasam and Matam prevailed there?

Scholars sometimes wonder why no mention is made of Paul's family (1). If they had understood why in the Byzantine Guide to Painting by Dionysius, Paul is made to stand in water while Ananias lays his hand upon Paul's head (2), they would not wonder. For that act was the bestowal of Sanyasam by Ananias. Paul was a follower of Jesus. Why did Jesus utter those words "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and "Who is my mother or my brethren:" was it not because that he became a Sanyasin at the hands of John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordon? And is it not for the same reason that in the beautiful painting of Jesus by Rubens existing in Pinakothek in Munich (3) he is represented in a red pallium (Kashaya vastram)? And what does the Redeemer say in Mathew X, 34-38; XIX, 29; and in Luke XII, 49-53? Does he not say therein forsake father and mother, brother and sister, house and lands and pleasures and honours of the world to follow him? Was not that Sanyasam. Was it not because the Son of God was a Hindu, that he did so, said so and wanted his followers to act so? What is the association referred to by St. Paul in I Timothy, v. 9? Was it not a Matam where female ascetics might congregate and

(1) Pope Catholic Students Aids to the study of Bible vol. III, pp. 46—47.
People's Bible Encyclopaedia, p. 841.

(2) Didron Christian Iconography, vol. II, p. 376.

(3) Old Masters, vol. II, p. 26.

work for Christ? We thus see that in Palestine also Sanyasam and Matam prevailed.

Sanyasi and Dasa are Sanscrit words. Sanyasi denotes one who forsakes the world for serving God. Dasa means one who forsakes the world for becoming the slave of God. And these terms mean exactly what Rev. Walder said. The word Dasa has two other meanings as Apte's Sanscrit Dictionary will point out—(1) a knowing person, *i.e.*, one who knows the Universal Spirit, (2) a worthy recipient. Sanyasini and Dasi are feminine forms of Sanyasi and Dasa. It has already been stated that Jesus was a Tamilian and that Aramaic was Tamil. Christianity, therefore, was a Tamil Reformer's sect. It is in Tamil language then that we must seek for a solution of the puzzle of the 16th verse. A reference to Madura Tamil Sangam Dictionary will show that theTamil words for Sanyasini and Dasi are Vittaval and Cherai. Both Vittaval and Cherai ultimately mean the same thing. The clues furnished by Rev. Walder and Prof. Bisseker have landed us on the Tamil words Vittava and Cherai which sound like the Latin Vidua and the Greek Cherai. Let us now re-write the puzzling verse with the Latin, Greek and Tamil words to see if they suit the context and give the same meaning.

"If any man or woman that believeth have

{ VIDUAS / CHERAS } let them relieve them and let not the

church be charged, that it may relieve them that are {VITTAVAE / CHERAIS} indeed."

St. Paul says that true believers should relieve their widows and not indent upon Church funds for their support, so that the Church might support true Sanyasinis, true slaves of God, women that really know the Universal spirit, women that are worthy recipients. If Paul had used the Hebrew word Almane for a widow, that term too, through Paronomasia, would give the same meaning. The criterion of St. Paul (we see thus) was not helplessness or impecuniosity but spirituality and self-sacrifice. The verse is intelligible now and does not clash with Western tradition. A Latin Vidua, a Greek Cherai is one that has lost her husband by death, a விடப்பட்டவள், a குறைப்பட்டவள், a passive victim of Fate. A Tamil Vittava, a Tamil Cherai is one who of her own free will has forsaken the world to become the slave of God, a விட்டவள், a சிறையானவள், an active victim of choice. Widowhood is accidental : asceticism is deliberate. No doubt it is the duty of the Church to succour helpless people. But Christ's Church in the times of Paul was but a tiny infant struggling to live tended by men like the Saint. Paul desires the passive victims of Fate to be helped by their relations and the active victims of choice to be helped by the Church so that the

Church might live, grow and spread. Quite a reasonable and intelligible attitude on the part of the Apostle when the then prevailing conditions are taken into consideration. It will thus be seen that the words Viduae and Cherais occurring at the end of the 16th verse in the Latin and the Greek texts respectively are not Latin and Greek terms at all but Tamil ones with foreign (Latin and Greek) terminations (just like the present day Indian terms Bandis, Pandits, Pandarams, Kuppams, Cheris, etc.).

If the West is correct in thinking that verses 3-8 refer to widows and verses 9-16 to a religious order, then the term widow occurring in the verses of the former block is a widow in its literal sense and that occurring in verses 9, 11 and 14 (R.V.) and 16 is Vittaval and Cherai, a female ascetic. We may understand hereafter why Sir William Smith's Lexicon said that the term of the 11th verse cannot be a widow in its literal sense but denoted one who led a consecrated life and that in the 2nd century the Greek word Cherai had that meaning. Sir William Smith's book was no doubt confoundingly referring to the Tamil Cherai which must have found its way into Greece along with the introduction of Christianity, a Tamil sect.

Tertulian, it will be remembered, spoke of "the Virgins who were called widows". A virgin is an unmarried woman and a widow is one that has lost her husband by death after marriage. How can a

virgin become a widow before wedding? It is an impossible feat. In the flush of enthusiasm in the beginning of Christianity spinsters along with married women and widows must have taken the vow of asceticism and joined the Church as workers and all these people must have been formed into a religious order—the association referred to in I Timothy, v. 9 and the Order of Widows or Vidua mentioned by Miss White. Only it was an Order not of widows but of Vittavas or Cherais. Indiscriminate entries of women, especially of virgins must have given rise to scandal, which made the Apostle to give instructions as in verses 9, 11 and 14 of this chapter and in certain other places. Since the younger widows of verses 11 and 14 were young unmarried ascetics, Paul uses the word marry not re-marry in them. We may comprehend hereafter how Miss White should have been misled into committing a blunder by Tertulian's statement.

St. Paul we thus see wrote not wholly about widows in the 5th chapter (as thought by theologians) but about widows and Sanyasinis. It is a peculiar habit with Indian Pandits and Pulavarayars to play and pun with words frequently. The great Bengali patriot Surendra Nath Bannerji was often known in India as Surrender Not Bannerji—Bannerji that would never surrender. Such usages are usual in multi-lingual countries. Palestine was a tri-lingual country in the time of Paul with

Aramaic (Tamil) as the language of the land. St. Paul was a Hebrew and a Pharisee—a colonial Indian and a Brahman. The juxtaposition of Vidua and Vittava in the Latin version and Cherai and Cherai in the Greek one cannot be due to editors or translators but must be attributed to Paul himself. We may dimly see through the veil of time the moving figure of the great Apostle of Europe halting at towns now and then and telling probably with a twinkle in his eye, congregations clamouring for money—(in Roman lands) look to your Viduas and I shall see to Vittavas—(in Greek lands) look to your Cheras and I shall see to Cherais—(in homelands) look to your Almanes and I shall see to Alammanis (Deva Ammas). Vidua and Vittava; Cherai and Cherai are words belonging to different languages with different meanings but they sound alike. So, as Christianity became more and more Europeanised and the Tamil origin of the Founder of that religion came to be forgotten in the roll of time and as St. Paul wrote on the subject of women, the West confounding the two terms (Vidua and Vittava: Cherai and Cherai) retained the most commonly known Latin and Greek words (Vidua and Cherai) giving to them the denotation of the lost Tamil words (Vittava and Cherai) also and that is why the Biblical passage has been made difficult and interpreted variously as observed by Dean Alford.